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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S EMPOWERMENT FUND

¶1. Mission Morocco's initial USD 100,000 funding allotment for the Ambassador's Empowerment Fund (AEF) was disbursed in early FY-07 and has achieved great benefits for the communities that received grants. The program allows the Ambassador to identify deserving organizations and provide them with rapid response funding for small projects to improve the lives of the members of their communities. There were seven recipients in the first year of the AEF and projects assisted people in the fields of education, healthcare, economic empowerment, environmental protection and social services.

¶2. The AEF contributed USD 29,133 to pay for living expenses at a dormitory for 20 rural high school-age female students over a three-year period (September 2006-June 2009) run by the Azilal Association for Development, Environment and Communication in Azilal. The dormitory provides a safe and respectable place to live, so the girls can leave their remote and socially conservative villages and continue their education in a larger town where a secondary education is available. For the cost of approximately USD 1.50 per day per student, these girls will have the chance to become educated and worldly leaders in their communities, which often suffer a female illiteracy rate of 80 percent. These girls will act as role models for other children to stay in school, learn new skills and gain the necessary tools to compete in a globalized economy.

¶3. Fatna Melida, a young Moroccan woman with an uncertain future, received a grant of USD 1,826 to pay for tuition at a computer training school, English lessons and living expenses at an orphanage in Rabat where she was raised. Without this grant, Fatna probably would have had to leave the orphanage because she had reached the age (17) when children are normally expected to become self sufficient. The AEF offered to pay for the second and final year of expenses for these training programs if Fatna applied herself and showed that she was doing well. This incentive helped and she successfully received this follow on funding. Fatna should complete her studies in July 2008. The AEF has helped Fatna gain marketable skills, foreign language ability and discipline. More importantly, she has also become a role model for other children at the orphanage to apply themselves, get an education and become economically independent.

¶4. The Moroccan Association for the Support of Development Initiatives (AMAID) used USD 12,500 of AEF funding to provide glasses for over 400 underprivileged children (ages 6-15) who otherwise would have likely eventually dropped out of school because their families could not afford to buy them glasses. Without glasses, the children could not adequately participate in school and pass their examinations. AMAID partnered with the Ministries of Education and Health to cover the costs of eye examinations and allow more of the AEF funding to be used for glasses, and therefore help a greater number of children. As a result, the children of an impoverished rural area can continue their educations and become economically viable members of society.

¶5. Working with the American International Women's Association, the AEF contributed USD 12,255 to complete the interior of a workshop/literacy center, buy furnishings and pay the initial salary

of a literacy instructor for a project in an impoverished neighborhood of Sale. This project has helped urban, poor and largely illiterate women and girls earn an income by teaching them to weave rugs and give them the equipment and facility in which to work. They also learn to read and write - skills they bring back to their homes and teach to their own family members and friends. The ability to earn a living and gain an education helps to improve the lives of these women and their families in a multitude of ways. It also gives them hope for a brighter future and helps prevent their family members from falling victim to the call of radicalization, which often preys on those who feel themselves excluded from society and do not have the means to improve their lives.

¶6. The AEF contributed USD 13,000 to a USD 25,000 project by the High Atlas Foundation (HAF) for the purchase 100,000 sapling fruit trees that it will distribute to numerous communities in the region of the High Atlas Mountains. Saplings cost only about 20 cents each compared to USD 1 for orchard-ready trees, therefore this allows for a much larger economic impact for the local communities. Initially, the saplings will be grown in a nursery for two years, and land and water for this part of the project will be supplied by a private landowner who will take 10 percent of the trees as reimbursement. Then, the trees will be distributed to the people of 60 remote villages where they will benefit 10,000 local inhabitants. The saplings consist of walnut, pear, apple, plum and cherry trees and they will help offer sustainable economic opportunities to local people in this economically depressed region. In addition, the trees will help protect the environment (reverse deforestation and combat soil erosion), diversify the diet of the members of the local communities, and help mitigate (employment driven) urban migration. HAF estimates that within 4-6 years the trees should help recipient communities to increase their incomes by as much as 150 percent. HAF has already successfully planted 25,000 trees in 25 rural villages.

¶7. The Association Oujda Ain Ghazal 2000 received USD 13,310 from the AEF to supply furnishings and equipment for the Oujda Emergency Shelter and Legal Advocacy Center (battered women's shelter). This region suffered from a severe lack of government-supported civil services and public awareness of spousal abuse. This project helped offer protection to some of the most vulnerable members of society and upon its opening it was sheltering 27 women and 12 children. The center had to hire additional staff members shortly after opening. The Emergency Shelter and Legal Advocacy Center provides emergency care for battered women in the city of Oujda and provides legal counseling and advocacy to women about their rights under the reformed Family Law. At the center, abused women and their children are offered accommodation affording them immediate relief from their threatening environments. It also provides treatment for emergency medical problems, psychological support, and employment training.

¶8. In a similar project in the region of Ouarzazate, the NOUR Association for the Solidarity with Rural Women used USD 17,375 to purchase equipment and furnishings for a center for disadvantaged women and children. The Government of Morocco's National Initiative for Human Development agreed to construct a building for the center, but unfortunately this has been delayed by more than one year. Completion of the building is expected in June 2008. Initially, the program plans to offer counseling and job training to 100 disadvantaged women per day. Job training will include classes in literacy, computer use, cooking, hairdressing, and handicraft training. Later, a second phase of the program will offer assistance to street children and unqualified teenagers (school dropouts) and offer them shelter. The region is among the poorest in the country and suffers from high levels of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. Women are especially adversely affected. The center should improve living conditions for women and children by providing a basic education, job training, counseling and shelter.

¶9. Mission Morocco's initial phase of the AEF successfully made rapid and significant improvements in the lives of hundreds of Moroccans and brought the USG much good will and public relations. These projects will continue to provide sustainable improvements in the lives of the recipients and bring positive influences to those around them. With the maturation of the trees of the HAF project, the numbers of beneficiaries will grow into the thousands. Post will continue to work with our partner organizations in these projects to ensure that with the passing of time the benefits of these programs continue to grow.